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AUTHOR Merriam, Allen H.
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ABSTRACT

Arguing that assumptions and behaviors related to time are culturally determined, this paper proposes that diplomats must learn to pay more attention to comparative chronemics--the study of time across cultures. The paper points out that differences in the perception of time was a key element in the conflict between Iran and the United States in which 50 Americans were taken hostage. It describes chronemic behavior in the United States as linear, formal, and precise--reflecting a cultural emphasis on newness, progress, and efficiency--and in Iran as marked by temporality and interpretable in terms of a complex mixture of Persian lifestyles, foreign interference in Iranian history, Islamic "instantaneism," and Shi'ite mysticism. The paper concludes that a greater sensitivity to chronemic orientations across cultures is essential for effective international diplomacy. (FL)

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COMPARATIVE CHRONEMICS AND DIPLOMACY: AMERICAN AND IRANIAN PERSPECTIVES ON TIME

Allen H. Merriam

Abstract

This essay argues that a key element in the conflicts between Iran and the United States over the hostages involved deeply ingrained and culturally determined differences in the perception of time. Chronemic behavior in the United States is described as linear, formal, and precise, reflecting a cultural emphasis on newness, progress, and efficiency. Temporality among the revolutionaries in Iran, on the other hand, must be interpreted in terms of a complex mixture of Persian lifestyles, foreign interference in Iranian history, Islamic "instantaneism," and Shi'ite mysticism. A greater sensitivity to chronemic orientations across cultures is viewed as essential for effective international diplomacy.

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COMPARATIVE CHRONEMICS AND DIPLOMACY:

AMERICAN AND IRANIAN PERSPECTIVES ON TIME

A major factor in the relations between nations and peoples involves attitudes toward time. The speed with which issues are discussed, decisions made, and socio-economic changes encouraged vary greatly from culture to culture. The French sociologist Gurvitch expressed a simple yet profound truth: "Time in France is not identical with time in Norway nor with time in Brazil."[1] In noting that human societies have developed vastly different rates for processing environmental stimuli, a Finnish scholar concluded that "the relative experience of time in different cultures is one of the basic difficulties in intercultural communication."[2]

Observers of human communication have increasingly acknowledged the fundamental importance of temporal behavior as a defining characteristic of culture. For example, a Brazilian pointed out that

> The rigid Anglo-Saxon attitude -- "Time is money" -- with an almost mystical cult of minutes and seconds on account of their practical, commercial value, is in sharp contrast to the Latin American attitude, a sort of "more or less" ("mais ou menos") attitude. It is easy to understand why a Nordic was so shocked in Spain to know that a Spanish or Latin American guest in a hotel asked the desk to call him next morning not exactly at ten or ten-fifteen, as an Anglo-Saxon or an Anglo-American would have asked, but at ten or eleven.[3]

Similarly, the traditional Japanese emphasis on ritual and personal formality can create frustration for Westerners bent on settling a transaction. A Japanese businessman noted the American concern with speed: "You are impatient. We have learned that if we just make you wait long enough, you'll agree to anything."[4]

In India, where the Hindu doctrine of rebirth has fostered a Weltanschauung which views time as a cyclical process, concerns with

universal principles and contemplative thought traditionally have taken precedence over interest in chronicles of history and quantitative time. Nakamura attributed this tendency to the Sanskrit language with its indiscriminate use of tense, indefinite adverbs related to time, and predisposition for nouns (static being)over verbs (active becoming).[5] Other scholars have investigated the temporal orientations implicit in cultural contexts ranging from China [6] and India[7] to Latin America,[8] Nigerian tribes,[9] and Christian theology.[10] Indeed, the world's religions provide an especially appropriate avenue of investigation for, as Brandon observed, a major impulse with most world religions is the need of humans to cope with their own finiteness and mortality through devotion to a deity who is both changeless and eternal.[11]

Recognizing that human assumptions and behaviors related to time are culturally determined, we must pay increasing attention to comparative chronemics--the study of time across cultures. This emerging branch of international studies promises practical benefit, as knowledge generated by anthropoligists and communication specialists is applied by persons engaged in diplomacy, multinational business, Third World development, and tourism.

The seizure of some fifty Americans at the U. S. embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979 produced dramatic new evidence of the importance of time perspectives in international relations. The subsequent holding of the hostages provides a case study in comparative chronemics. Much of the diplomatic tension which developed between Tehran and Washington can be attributed to conflicting conceptions of time. This essay analyzes the cultural and ideological determinants of the chronemic differences between Iran and the United States.

The Hostages and Time

The United States response to the hostage situation generally can be characterized as one of impatience and frustration at the slowness of resolving the conflict. Many Americans undoubtedly shared the opinion of a voter in Pennsylvania who told a National Public Radio reporter on April 23, 1980 that the President "should have given them 24 hours" to release the hostages or sent in the Marines. Pressured by cultural and political constraints to appear to be "doing something" toward freeing the captives, President Carter refused to leave the Washington area for the first six minths of the ordeal claiming the need to oversee developments. At a press conference on April 17, 1980 Carter said "...the patience of the American people is running out."[12] The following day a White House official indicated that "the President's patience is running out."[13]

Such statements proved prophetic, for a week later the United States attempted to free the hostages with a daring helicopter mission. In justifying the unsuccessful rescue effort, Defense Secretary Harold Brown gave insight into the American perspective of time. Brown said the U.S. had acted because "there was no reason to believe that the hostages would be released in the foreseeable future." Then, in his next sentence, Brown admitted that Iranian officials had hinted at a variety of possible times when the captives might be freed: "...May, June, July, the end of the year..."[14] Thus one, two, or three months away seemed outside "the foreseeable future" to the Carter administration. Following the failed mission, the U. S. launched a campaign to enlist the support of European allies in establishing a "dealine" in late May after which economic sanctions would be imposed on Iran.

Indicative of the U. S. perception was the use, by both government officials and the mass media, of the term "crisis" to describe the situation. Such a word connotes a sense of urgency, but crises normally do not extend over a prolonged period of time. While conflicts or tensions may be protracted, a crisis implies a climax, a problem at the pinnacle of decision-making which cries for immediate resolution. To apply this word to a situation where 52 people were receiving food, clothing, and shelter -- the physical and psychological traumas of captivity notwithstanding -- seemed more like a technique of nationalistic propaganda than of reasoned diplomacy.

The American mass media undoubtedly contributed to the U. S. impatience with the "crisis." Almost every newscast would enumerate the length of the hostages' captivity: the 38th day, the 175th day, the 356th day, etc. News magazines reported the "depressing" reality "that there is no quick end in sight" to the deadlock.[15] Newspapers frequently portrayed the Islamic Revolution as an attempt to push Iran "backward" to the seventh century. For example, on November 10, 1978, a year before the hostage-seizure, a San Francisco Chronicle editorial described the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini as "the intransigent, reactionary Shiite religious leader" who symbolized a "fanatic priesthood."[16] The New York Daily News editorialized that "As long as Ayatollah Khomeini calls the shots, and as long as that old fanatic is held in the sway of the militant captors, there is no way to make a deal with Iran."[17] Such reporting served to harden stereotypes rather than encourage the search for a negotiated settlement.

American impatience with this violation of diplomatic privilege produced a single-minded obsession with maintaining her national honor. The Iranian perception, paradoxically, grew out of a more time-conscious hurt created by over twenty-five years of alleged U. S. imperialism in Iran. The historical-social context of American support for the Shah, which extended for a whole generation, contrasted to the U. S. preoccupation with the more immediate matter of kidnapping. Even the Ayatollah Khomeini himself had endured fifteen years in exile in Iraq and France. Future psychobiographies of him will no doubt emphasize the function of such a prolonged exile in hardening his resolve to oppose the Pahlavi monarchy.

Iran's lack of a strong central government in the months following the Shah's ouster exacerbated the American perception that Iran was out of control. The successive collapses of the Bakhtiar, Barzargan, and Ghotbzadeh governments and the several postponements in the election of the Majlis (Parliament) fueled this notion. Early in the Spring, 1980 Prime Minister Sadegh Ghotbzadeh responded to a reporter's question about when the parliamentary elections would occur by saying "it will become known." Such lack of specificity about a national election, while understandable in the revolutionary climate of contemporary Iran, would be almost inconceivable in American politics where election dates are clearly established and firmly adhered to.

In the Fall of 1980 the Majlis finally adopted the four conditions for the release of the hostages: the U. S. must unfreeze Iranian assets in American banks, the late Shah's wealth must be returned to Iran, all lawsuits against Iran must be dropped, and the U. S. must pledge not to interfere in Iran's affairs. Negotiations on these demands were jeopardized,

however, by the outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq and by the impending change in administrations in Washington. In commenting upon Ronald Reagan's victory on November 4th (the first anniversary of the embassy takeover),the deputy speaker of the Majlis was quoted by Tehran Radio as saying: "Because Carter was already in office, we would have reached a solution faster if he were re-elected. With Reagan's victory this will need a long time."[18] For Jimmy Carter, whose defeat was in part attributable to the unresolved hostage situation, it had already been an excruciatingly long time.

As the Carter administration desperately sought to resolve the stalemate before leaving office, Iranian leaders seemed to harden their bargaining position. On December 21 Executive Affairs Minister Behzad Nabavi, head of his government's negotiating team, declared: "We can keep them for ten more years and give them food and clothing."[19] Six days later Tehran Radio quoted Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Rajai as saying the hostages would "never" be freed if Iran's terms were not met.[20] Such public pronouncements illustrated the use of exaggeration and concealment through overstatement, traits characteristic of Persian rhetoric.[21]

The final days of the Carter presidency witnessed a flurry of intense negotiations mediated by diplomats from Algeria. Convinced that the hostages would serve little additional political benefit domestically, beleaguered by a shortage of cash caused by the continuing war with Iraq, and aware that a Reagan administration would offer no better terms, Iran finally agreed to release the hostages in exchange for the unfreezing of Iranian assets held in the United States. On January 20, 1981 the 52 hostages flew out of Iran, literally within minutes of the inauguration of

Ronald Reagan. During the 444 days of captivity Iranian and American negotiators clearly had operated from cultures with vastly differing perspectives on time, to which we now turn.

Time in the United States

Daily life in the United States generally requires conformity to the precise measurement of time. Watches typically form a part of the clothing of Americans and clocks abound in public buildings and private automobiles. Doctors and other professional people work according to appointments and mass transportation operates on a system of schedules and timetables. Banks and insurance companies use clearly defined time units such as "interest compounded daily," thirty-year loans, and policies which expire at 12:01 a.m. on a specified date. Even many of the sports Americans enjoy in their "leisure time" such as basketball, football, hockey, soccor, boxing and track and field are regulated by the clock.

Much of this social preoccupation with time results from the demands of urbanization and modern industrialization. A formalized system of timekeeping may be a prerequisite for the type of economic activity found in most Western nations, where commerce revolves around production schedules, delivery dates, and deadlines. In a capitalistic economy the failure to provide fast, efficient service may result in the loss of business to one's competitor. It is instructive to note that at the outset of the Industrial Revolution in Europe craftsmen viewed the clock as "the machine par excellence."[22]

The Puritan ethic, which continues to exert pervasive influence in the United States, entailed a strict accounting of the way one uses time.

The keeping of diaries, still common in Anglo-American cultures, represents a means of recording one's daily activities, subtly encouraging the recorder to keep busy. "Idle hands," holds an American proverb, "soon find the work of the Devil." Hall observed that when talking about time English speakers employ verbs (buy, sell, save, spend, waste, use, lose, make up, measure) which are essentially economic terms, supporting Ben Franklin's dictum that, for Americans, "Time is money."[23]

The strict American concern with exactness in time measurement has produced a culture which places great emphasis on speed and efficiency, as seen in the popularity of fast-food restaurants. Wright coined the word "chronarchy" to describe modern America, where people are "ruled by time" and "regimented by timekeeping."[24] Not surprisingly, the major health problems in the United States involve ulcers, heart attacks, and high blood pressure, all of which are linked to the effects of stress. The emphasis on speed and action in American society borders on a kind of psychological mania which Bruneau aptly termed "chronophilia."[25]

Americans characteristically conceive of time as linear in nature, moving inevitably forward from the past to the future. The normative roots for this conception lie in the Judeo-Christian formulation of the Creation, representing God's launching of time and the world. Significant events, such as the birth of Christ, the arrival of Columbus in the New World in 1492, and the American Revolution of 1776, form stages of advancement in the onward "march of history." Thus, the time perspective of Americans is largely future-oriented, based on the assumption that through human effort the future can be made better than the past. Much political rhetoric

centers on the need to build "a better world for our children."

Americans, therefore, are generally optimistic about the future, confident in the possibilities for material and personal advancement.[26] The idea of "progress" underlies this world-view, permeating in a fundamental way the American attitude toward the future. General Electric's slogan, "Progress is our most important product," illustrates the effort of U. S. industry to continually create new, improved, and innovative products. Inventors like Thomas Edison and Alexander Graham Bell represent national folk heroes. Chase may not have exaggerated when asserting that Progress is "the ultimate God of America."[27]

Time in Iran

The perception of time in Iran varies considerably from the typical temporal orientation in the United States. Iranians generally place far less emphasis on an exact adherence to precise timing. Hall recounts how two Iranian colleagues failed to meet together despite twelve appointments.[28] In a recent study of the cultural frames of reference of nearly 2,000 Iranian and American college students, Szalay and others concluded that

> While the American feels controlled by the clock and obliged to be on time, the Iranian feels that the clock is created for his convenience and should be used as an indication of general not specific time. An Iranian might simply say, "I will meet you after the sun sets."
>
> In general conversation it is not possible to rely on the precise meaning of many expressions of time. For example, the word alan (right now, this instant) is used in many ways depending on the occasion. It could mean now or in a short while; it might mean anytime this morning or this afternoon, or it could mean not at all. For instance, when inquiring about when someone will return, if the person asking is a friend, "right now" means as soon as he is finished with his other business. If a stranger

is asking about someone's co-worker, "right now" is a polite substitute for "I don't know." Farda (tomorrow) is another word meaning the next day, the first chance, the next week, or the next year depending of what is to happen and who is inquiring.[29]

Iran's different (Americans would say "slower") tempo of life may be explained in part by her still largely agricultural society. Approximately two thirds of all Iranians live in villages. The lifestyle of farmers revolves around the passing of the seasons rather than the minutes of a clock. Riding a donkey to one's local village contrasts dramatically to the urban office worker's need to catch a commuter train or bus. A Persian proverb holds that "only the Devil hurries" (Ajaleh koreh sheton ast).[30]

Another factor contributing to Iran's relaxed attitude toward time involves a long history of foreign invasions and quasi-colonial domination. Alexander the Great conquered much of present-day Iran in the 4th century, B.C., and Roman armies followed. In the seventh century, A. D. Arab invaders supplanted Zoroastrianism with Islam. In the eleventh century Seljuk Turks claimed large areas of Iran, and in the thirteenth century they in turn were overpowered by Mongols led by Genghis Khan. Later, Ottoman and Afghan rulers seized parts of Iran. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries Iran suffered encroachments from Russia to the North, while Britain exerted counter pressure in an effort to protect India, culminating in a strong British role in restoring the monarchy to power in 1921. Allied troops occupied Iran during World War II, while British and American oil companies maneuvered for concessions. From the CIA's invovement in ousting Prime

Minister Mohamed Mossadegh in 1953 to the presence in 1977 of 50,000 American technicians and advisers, Iran formed an appendage to the global strategic interests of the United States.[31]

Thus, unlike the United States, Iran has experienced the heavy hand of foreign domination and control, especially in this century. Such external forces frequently produce tendencies toward slowness and indifference, which represent defense mechanisms for people who have lost control of their own destiny. Persons subjugated by slavery, colonialism, or foreign domination often find spontaneity stifled with the future holding little promise or appeal.[32]

Another dimension of Iran's time perspective relates to the long and glorious heritage of Persian civilization. Inheritors of a 2,500 year tradition stretching back to Cyrus the Great, contemporary Iranians enjoy a sense of history which is both deep and proud.[33] The major Persian epics and folklore came from a distinguished line of poets and cultural heroes including Firdausi, Omar Khayyam, Rumi, Sa'adi, and Hafiz, who flourished between the tenth and fourteenth centuries. Such a heritage does not exist in the United States, whose national history covers a mere two centuries and the bulk of whose citizens descended from immigrants and refugees from other countries.

Indicative of the limited American sense of history was the comment made by President Carter at a press conference on February 13, 1980. When asked if, as a means of placating the Iranian militants, the United States would admit its role in restoring the Shah to the throne in 1953, Carter replied that he was not going to get involved in "ancient history."[34] For

Iranians, who in 1971 celebrated the 2500th anniversary of the founding of the Persian Empire, 1953 is certainly not ancient history, but directly relevant to the issues surrounding the holding of the hostages.

The glorification of one's national heritage invites a concentration on the past rather than on the future. This is especially true for nations with a relatively low level of economic development. Thus the efforts at modernization in twentieth century Iran conflicted with deeply ingrained tendencies toward tradition and resistance to change. Efforts by the deposed Shah's father, Reza Shah Pahlavi, to introduce radical reforms such as the unveiling of women, the redistribution of land, and the introduction of Western science prompted a conservative backlash, much of which was aimed at "the rapid tempo of external change" between 1925 and 1940.[35]

Similarly, public disfavor with Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi grew in part from the nature and speed of the changes he sought to impose on Iran. The deposed monarch's vision of rapid industrialization, which required massive foreign (mostly American and Israeli) assistance plus a reduced role for the Muslim clergy, was embodied in the famous "White Revolution" which triggered large-scale protest demonstrations in June, 1963. Many of the opposition leaders, including the Ayatollah Khomeini, were imprisoned, executed, or exiled.[36] While factors such as the brutal excesses of SAVAK and the failure to sufficiently broaden the level of participation in Iran's economic reforms contributed to the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, his demise stemmed in part from the speed of change he promoted. As he admitted, "Eventually, we went faster than some people could digest."[37]

In effect, the Islamic Revolution in Iran involved two conflicting concepts of progress. The Shah assumed that the hallmarks of a modern, progressive nation include Western technology, the latest military hardware, increased secularization, and liberated roles for women. Revolutionaries loyal to the Ayatollah Khomeini perceived the introduction of foreign engineers, liquor, mini-skirts, and sexually explicit movies (all of which seem to accompany Western models of modernization) not as "progress," but rather as threats to the social and religious institutions which historically have provided Iran with its stability and continuity. As a prominent Iranian journalist observed:

> Khomeini's public tirades have left Americans convinced that he and his followers are fanatically against the United States. In fact, they are against every influence of the contemporary world that might distract the faithful from their devotion to God. Khomeini has referred to the United States as the great taghoot, and this has been translated here as "the great Satan." But this is a mistranslation, for taghoot in the Koran refers to the idols that were destroyed by the prophet Abraham, and when Khomeini applies it to the United States he is not inciting Iranians to hatred but is calling on them to reject a materialistic, contemporary view of life.[38]

Time in Islam

While a variety of secular and environmental forces have helped shape the tempo of Iranian life, the leadership and motive power behind the 1979 Revolution derive their inspiration most importantly from Islam. The majority of members of the Revolutionary Council are Muslim clergy (mullahs), whose dominant value system rests in assumptions inherent in Iran's uniquely religious ethos. A proper understanding of the chronemic perspective of the militants who seized the American hostages must be viewed against the background of the temporal implications of Islam.

Islam sprang from the same geographical area as Judaism and Christianity and, like those older faiths, fosters an intense monotheism, a book describing a succession of prophets, and a belief in the final Day of Judgment. Islam thus shares, in some ways, a chronemic orientation not unlike that of the Judeo-Christian tradition. Indeed, the Koran speaks of days of Creation, the month of fasting (Ramadan), the observance of the weekly Sabbath, and the alternations of the sun and moon, all of which imply a precise sensitivity to linear time.

When Arab invaders brought Islam into Iran in the seventh century A. D., it supplanted the ancient and indigenous Zoroastrianism. That religion, which was followed in Iran for some 1300 years, portrayed time in terms of a progressive struggle between Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda), the Lord of Wisdom associated with goodness, light, and eternity, and Ahriman, the Lord of Evil.[39] Implicit in the Zoroastrian cosmogony was a philosophical dualism between Infinite Time (Zurvan akarana) and Finite Time (Zurvan daregho-chvadhata).[40] The ancient Zoroastrians celebrated Ohrmazd and the act of Creation with Nowruz (New Year), a festival symbolizing the regeneration of life and the renewing of the cosmos. This holiday has persisted to the present day as a major Iranian festival.[41]

As Islam replaced Zoroastrianism it infused a new moral earnestness into Iranian society. Central to the Muslim ontology is the belief that Allah is the only ultimate Reality (al-Haqq). The physical world, therefore, can be viewed as merely momentary flashes, the succession of which gives the appearance of continuity and permanance,

analogous to the kinetoscope in cinematography. Allah renews every moment, with time itself being

> made up of ((now's)) ('anat). This means that time is made up of a great many ((times)) which cannot be further subdivided....Thus there are only momentarily existing individuals as the will of Allah, from moment to moment, decrees.[42]

Massignon, a prominent French scholar, concurs that Muslim temporality is conceived in terms of "atoms of time" (awaqat). In Islamic theology, he argues, "time is not a continuous 'duration,' but a constellation, a 'galaxy' of instance."[43] This "discontinuous, piecemeal apperception of time"[44] is imbedded in the Arabic language, whose grammar "does not conceive of 'verbal times' [tenses] as states; in principle it knows only 'verbal aspects,' the finished [perfect] (madi) and the unfinished [imperfect] (mudari') which mark, outside of our time, the degree in which the (divine) action is made real."[45]

The belief that Allah controls each instant of time has given rise, within Islam, to a mind-set which Westerners frequently describe as fatalistic. Contemporary Iranian speech patterns adhere to the Koranic injunction to qualify all references to the future with In-sha-Allah (if God so wills).[46] Indeed, Persian (Farsi) speaking peoples find it difficult to conceive of the near-future as anything other than an indeterminant extension of the present. When asked when someone will return, a Persian speaker will frequently reply alley meayah ("He is coming now.") This might mean in five minutes, one hour, tomorrow, or even weeks later.[47]

In a study of conceptions of the "future" (ayande) among nearly 1,000 Iranian students, researchers obtained additional evidence relating

to the Muslim conviction that only God can know the future. Whereas Americans in the study tended to associate the future with "scientific and technological progress, brightness, and promise," even if tinged with uncertainty, the Iranians showed a strong tendency

> ...to believe that the future is influenced by predestination [sarnevesht]: one may wish and hope, search and speculate, imagine and dream about the future, but what it brings is fundamentally unknown yet predetermined.[48]

Most Muslims would deny that a belief in the divine control of the future absolves humans of responsibility for action. Indeed, as the Tunisian philosopher Ahmed Hasnaoui asserted, the Islamic concept of time (in Arabic: dahr) holds life to be a "place of testing," an inevitable ethical experience, a relationship between the temporal and the eternal.[49] Human efforts, therefore, are not negated, but simply kept in the perspective of God's omnipotence. The Iranian Revolution is dramatic refutation to arguments that Muslims are largely fatalistic. But whereas most Western Christian societies have evolved ethical and judicial systems concerned with process and "becoming," Islam assumes that the Truth has already been divinely authored and finialized in the revelations of the Prophet Mohammed. The Speech of God (the Koran) and the Muslim legal code (the Shari'a) have been given once and for all, and therefore deviation is neither needed nor tolerable for, as the Prophet reportedly said, "All innovation is the work of the devil."[50] Consistent with this belief in the eternal applicability of revealed Truth, the Ayatollah Khomeini told an interviewer in 1979: "Islamic laws are always congruent with the conditions of time and place."[51]

We have characterized Islamic time as a divinely authored "instantaneism," which contrasts both to the cyclical nature of the Hindu

cosmology and the linearity of the Judeo-Christian system. But the chronemic configuration of Iranian Islam has been influenced by two additional forces: Shi'ism and Sufism. Nearly 85% of Iran's Muslims profess Shi'ism, a branch of Islam which emphasizes the concept of the Imam, a Guide believed to possess special spiritual gifts and understanding. In Shi'ite Iran, explained Corbin, the true believer (mu'min) is one who follows an Imam into the mysteries of the "world of Hurqalya," the "Earth of visions" where spiritual events take place outside of chronological physical time (zaman afaqi), in a qualitative, endogenous time (zaman anfusi) which is "the history of the soul."[52] Such esoteric meanings are difficult for Westerners to grasp since they violate the evolutionary and linear viewpoint of Western time. Moreover, for diplomats grounded in a society proud of its strict separation of church and state, the necessity of dealing with ayatollahs who can dismiss prime ministers, command the army, and control decisions in Parliament requires an unusually high degree of flexibility.

Shi'ism's expectation of the Hidden Imam, analogous to the Second Coming of Christ or the Future Buddha, presupposes a spiritual transformation symbolized by entry into the world of Hurqalya. In a 1947 Persian discourse on the role of Hurqalya in the Shi'ite faith, Shaikh Abu'l-Qasim Khan Ibrahimi, a contemporary of the Ayatollah Khomeini and fifth successor to the founder of Iranian Shaikhism, described the timeless dimension of this spiritual state:

> The unlimited duration of these universes of the barzakh [soul universes] contains gradations which are likewise unlimited, and which are not like the measurements of this world of ours. In our traditions, the duration of these worlds is often

> interpreted in terms of millenia....The days and the years are different from our earthy accidental days and years, which follow one another and replace one another. We lack the means of comparison.[53]

The spiritual metamorphosis envisioned by Shaikh Ibrahimi corresponds to the mystical experience central to Sufism, yet another expression of Islamic ardor in Iran. Exerting an influence far beyond their numbers, the Sufis seek a religious ecstasy which can produce a "non-being in time" or "timeless being." Through trances, music, and spiritual exercises, Sufis attempt to probe "the hidden secret of time" (batin al-zaman), the permanent instant in which the divine Presence is extended.[54] The ecstasy (wajd) achieved when a Sufi feels united with God produces an emotional state free from the normal senses and time consciousness.[55] Sufi mysticism provides an intangible yet undeniable impulse to the theocratic vision of Iran's revolutionaries.

Conclusion

We have seen that the conceptualizations of time in the United States and Iran differ significantly. The frames of reference, the definitions of "progress," and the tempos of life in the two nations reflect vastly different social and ideological contexts. Admittedly, in the tension of 1979-81 leaders on both sides were susceptible to emotional outbursts which resulted more from the anxieties of the moment than from the historical traditions or future goals of their two peoples. But there can be little doubt that a root cause of the disagreements and misunderstandings eminated from conflicting orientations toward time.

It may be unrealistic to expect Western diplomats to base daily political decisions on an understanding of the complex interplay between

Zoroastrian cosmology, Persian history, Sufi mysticism, and Islamic dogma. Yet the mentality and perceptions of Iran's new revolutionary leaders remain subtly influenced by just such forces as these. Effective diplomacy, on both sides, must be informed and sensitive if we are to reduce the chronemic gap separating the two cultures.

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[17]"Iranian Shambles," New York Daily News, March 12, 1980, p. C-13.

[18]Quoted in "Iran: Reagan wins slows hostage plan," Roanoke Times and World News, November 6, 1980, p. 1.

[19]"Iran sets its price: $24 billion," Roanoke Times & World News, December 22, 1980, p. A-8.

[20]"Iran's Version of U. S. Replies Not Confirmed," Bluefield (W.Va.) Daily Telegraph, December 28, 1980, p. 1.

[21]Historically Shi'ite Persians developed a propensity for ambiguous and highly embellished language, legitimized by the doctrine of taquiyeh, as a means of avoiding persecution by Sunni Muslims. See Donald N. Wilber, "Language and Society: The Case of Iran," Behavior Science Notes, 2 (1967), 22-30, and my own "Rhetoric and the Islamic Tradition," Today's Speech, 22 (Winter, 1974), 43-49.

[22]Carlo M. Cipolla, Clocks and Culture, 1300-1700 (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1978), p. 57.

[23]Edward T. Hall, The Silent Language (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1959), p. 132.

[24]Lawrence Wright, Clockwork Man (New York: Horizon Press, 1968), p. 7.

[25]Tom Bruneau, "The Time Dimension in Intercultural Communication," Communication: the Journal of the Communication Association of the Pacific 8 (1979), p. 177.

[26]Edward C. Stewart, American Cultural Patterns: a Cross-cultural Perspective (Pittsburgh: Regional Council for International Education, 1972), pp. 63-66.

[27]Stuart Chase, The Tyranny of Words (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1938), p. 23.

[28]Hall, The Silent Language, pp. 28-29.

[29]Lorand B. Szalay, et. al., Iranian and American Perceptions and Cultural Frames of Reference: a Communication Lexicon for Cultural Understanding (Washington, D. C.: Institute of Comparative Social and Cultural Studies, 1979), pp. I-7,8.

[30]I am indebted to my friend Behrouz Tavangar for bringing this proverb to my attention.

[31]For analyses of foreign intervention in Iran see Kikki R. Keddie, "The Iranian Power Structure and Social Change, 1800-1960: An Overview," International Journal of Middle East Studies 2 (1971), pp. 3-20; and Mansour Farhang, "The Revolution in Iran," Inquiry, April 16, 1979, pp. 13-16.

[32]A history of subjugation and colonial domination may help explain the perceived slowness among blacks, sometimes referred to as "colored people's time." See Helen B. Green, "Temporal Attitudes in Four Negro Subcultures," in The Study of Time, op. cit., I, 402-417; and Dorothy Lee Pennington, "Temporality Among Black Americans: Implications for Inter-Cultural Communication," Ph.D. diss., University of Kansas, 1974. Of course the tempo of behavior can also be a function of personality, as shown in the interesting distinction between "andante" and "allegro" people in R. H. Knapp, "Personality and the Psychology of Time," in The Study of Time, I, p. 318.

[33]See Donald N. Wilber, Iran: Past and Present 8th ed. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976); and Roger M. Savory, "Iran: a 2,500-year Historical and Cultural Tradition," in Iranian Civilization and Culture (ed.) Charles J. Adams (Montreal: McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies, 1972), pp. 77-89.

[34]Quoted in "In the Works; a deal on Hostages," U. S. News and World Report February 25, 1980. p. 7.

[35]F. Kazemzadeh, "Ideological Crisis in Iran," In The Middle East in Transition (ed.) Walter Z. Laqueur (Freeport, N. Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1958), p. 198.

[36]For background see Thomas M. Ricks, "Islamic Republic and Iran Today," RIPEH, the Review of Iranian Political Economy and History 3 (1979), 1-16; and Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's 'White Revoluation': a Study in Political Development," International Journal of Middle East Studies 5 (1974), 124-139.

[37]Quoted in Jim Hoagland, "Shah regrets listening to U. S., Britain and not using military to crush Iran revolt," Roanoke Times and World News, May 27, 1980, p. A-8. See also Fred Halliday, Iran: Dictatorship and Development (Harmondsworth, N. Y.: Penguin, 1979).

[38]Amir Taheri, "Freeing the hostages could be a matter of crowd control in Iran," Roanoke Times and World News, May 1, 1980. p. A-3. See also Muhsin Mahdi, "Modernity and Islam," in Modern Trends in World Religions (ed.) Joseph M. Kitagawa (LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1959), pp. 1-30.

[39]See Henry Corbin, "Cyclical Time in Mazdaism and Ismailism," in Man and Time, Bollingen series 30:3 (New York: Pantheon, 1957), 115-172.

[40]See R. C. Zaehner, Zurvan: a Zoroastrian Dilemma (Oxford: Clarendon Press), 1955.

[41]See Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return trans. W. R. Trask, Bollingen Series XLVI (New York: Pantheon, 1954), pp. 63-66; and Josef Marquart, "The Nowruz, Its History and Its Significance," Journal of the Cama Oriental Institute (Bombay) 31 (1937), 1-51.

[42]Duncan Black Macdonald, "Continuous Re-Creation and Atomic Time in Muslim Scholastic Theology," Isis 9 (1927-28), pp. 329 and 334.

[43]Louis Massignon, "Time in Islamic Thought," in Man and Time (ed.) J. Campbell, op. cit., p. 108.

[44]Louis Gardet, "Moslem Views of Time and History: an Essay in Cultural Typology," in Cultures and Time (Paris: UNESCO, 1976),p.209.

[45]Massignon, p. 110.

[46]The Koran, Surah XVIII:24.

[47]This observation is based on personal experience living and working with Farsi-speaking people in Kabul, Afghanistan from 1965 to 1967.

[48]Szalay, pp. III-17,18.

[49]Ahmed Hasnaoui, "Certain Notions of Time in Arab-Muslim Philosophy," in Time and the Philosophies, op. cit., pp. 49-79.

[50]Quoted in Noel J. Coulson, "The Concept of Progress and Islamic Law," in Religion and Progress in Modern Asia (ed.) Robert N. Bellah (New York: Free Press, 1965), p. 74.

[51]Jim Cockcroft, "Iran's Khomeini: His Life, His Program, His Words," Seven Days 3 (February 23, 1979), p. 20.

[52]Henry Corbin, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth; from Mazdean Iran to Shi'ite Iran trans. N. Pearson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), pp. xii-xiii.

[53]Ibid., p. 262.

[54]Gardet, pp. 204 and 207.

[55]Annemarie Schimmel, Mystical Dimensions of Islam (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975), pp. 178-179. For a discussion of Sufi-Shi'ite interaction in Iran see "Shi'ism and Sufism: Their Relationship in Essence and in History," in Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Sufi Essays (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1972), pp. 104-120.